

The Story Behind the Stone: Pink Possibilities (/columnists/diana-jarrett/2647-the-story-behind-the-stone-pink-possibilities)

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Oh the hubris over fancy pink diamonds! Admittedly they are objects of desire and their at-auction price really depends on who's bidding that day, keeping in mind the last pink hammer price. Less stellar budgets can still bask in that rosy glow via fancy pink sapphires with a similar blushing tint. Both of those gem types are finding new devotees and in so doing, many collectors are reaching out to see what else the gem bag holds.



8.97 CT VORTEX CUT NIGERIAN PINK TOURMALINE. COURTESY OF SHERRIS SHANKS, GEMSCAPES.

Your customers may have already developed a taste for pinkies of one kind or another. But their budget will separate the haves from the have-nots in short order. There are some other natural pink gemstones to consider that will satisfy your star-struck customers however. The word is pink tourmaline.

The very name tourmaline signals its earliest admirers. From the Sinhalese 'tura mali' meaning stone with mixed colors, tourmaline has been unearthed in myriad hues for millennia. The last dowager Empress of China Tz'u Hsi loved the stuff so much she loaded up on the material from as far away as the Himalayas to San Diego, CA.

Today pink tourmaline is gaining traction as an exotic and coveted choice for modern jewelry collectors. Some of those fans may be coming in to your store looking for an "I'll know it when I see it" sort of thing. Offer them this precious stone and tell them the story.

Part of the pink tourmaline story refers to its most popular deposits; Afghanistan and Nigeria, both hot spots of political unrest. Sometimes the rough from either locale can look similar. The most desirable hues seem to be straight medium toned pink - neither peachy nor lilac tinted.

The current impossible climate in Afghanistan means that dealers with these gems are offering 'old stock.' Even Afghani nationals with family in the region are loathe to go back in search of the goods, says veteran gem carver Sherris Shank of Gemscapes. The pink rough comes out of the high mountainous regions, she says. "No roads there of course, so goods are loaded onto donkeys to make the trek downhill and ultimately out of the country." If that's not enough to deal with in this chaotic region, no one really knows who or where the bad guys are.

Nigerian pink tourmaline was more likely to be traded at Tucson last year. Nigeria has its own woes of course. Still some rough is coming out of that country, Shank reports. Look for more accessible sources like Mozambique, Tanzania and Namibia to satisfy your customer's burgeoning tastes for these delights.

Besides the color, sell the durability of these beauties. At 7 - 7.5 on the Mohs scale, they take a beautiful polish to boot. Offering these sensuous stones to your customers will whet their appetite for out-of-the-ordinary stones, and open up story telling opportunities for you to engage with them as they see the unique beauty in these blushing jewels.

Award winning trade journalist and gemologist Diana Jarrett is a Registered Master Valuer Appraiser and a member of the Association of Independent Jewellery Valuers (AIJV). She's a popular speaker at conferences and trade shows. Jarrett writes for trade and consumer publications, online outlets, her blog: Color-n-Ice, and www.jewelrywebsitedesigners.com (<http://www.jewelrywebsitedesigners.com>). Contact her at info@dianajarrett.com (<mailto:info@dianajarrett.com>), visit her website at www.dianajarrett.com (<http://www.dianajarrett.com>), and follow her on Facebook and Twitter (Loupey).